Olympian Leonard Ong is no stranger to challenges and obstacles. Thanks to his windsurfing career, he has always had to adapt to people, places and climate conditions. Despite a deep-rooted fear of the open seas, Ong took up windsurfing and with sheer grit, determination and hard work qualified for the 2016 Rio Olympic Games.

"Being overseas exposed me to stronger winds, larger waves and more experienced athletes, elevating my training." Ong expected the same from the overseas internship programme at Nanyang Business School, Nanyang Technological University, and it did not disappoint. For three years now, NBS students have been able to leverage overseas internship opportunities that instill in them a strong ability to understand and lead across cultures. These real-world experiences offer students diverse academic opportunities, build cultural competence, develop intellectual curiosity, and inspire students to create a better tomorrow.

Prior to enrolling at NBS, Ong enlisted in Singapore’s mandatory National Service. For someone who had not picked up a book for three years straight, returning to school was far from easy. Not one to shy away from a challenge, Ong rose to the occasion and graduated with a degree in business, specialising in Business Analytics and Human Resource Consulting.

Along the way, he grabbed the opportunity for an overseas internship in Qatar Airways and was stationed in Qatar, Doha for five months. "We have a great job market back home, which makes relocating less desirable. However, most companies have their regional headquarters in Singapore and it is important for us to understand different markets," said Ong. The complexity of the airline business and the ability to influence decisions about fleets piqued his interest. However, it was the thought of learning from an expat-driven Middle Eastern economy that excited him most. “Learning from people of different nationalities, understanding their worldview and their mindset gave me a unique insight and a new lens with which to approach my work,” says Ong.

Today, Ong works at OCBC Bank Singapore as part of the OCBC Graduate Talent Programme, employing financial and data analytics skills in his new role. Dealing with clients from all over the world, he offers clients a long-term view of their spend while using financial information to help companies make better decisions.